

Discount offered for using EZPass

By **D.L. Bonar**
Staff writer

DOVER — In an effort to encourage more use of the automated EZPass system on Del. 1, the Delaware Department of Transportation will begin offering reduced tolls to participants.

The electronic toll collection system reads a sensor as vehicles pass through a toll plaza, reducing the delay and a need to exchange cash with either a drop box or a toll taker.

Beginning with the opening of the Biddle's Corner toll plaza in mid-November, DelDOT will be charging a \$2 fee for cash customers to travel the length of the route to Dover.

As an incentive for motorists to use EZPass, DelDOT will charge two-axle vehicles \$1.70 to travel the length of the limited access road.

Amounts ranging from 50 cents to \$1.50 will be instituted to travel other sections of the highway.

"We want to encourage a greater use of (Del.) 1 by everyone," said Bret Taylor, transportation trust fund manager for DelDOT.

"We are looking at setting our tolls at a rate which will result in the state's share of the roadway being paid for in the long run."

According to DelDOT figures, Del. 1 will be comprised of 40.7 miles when it is completed in about two years. The total cost for the roadway will come to \$1.2 billion, with the state share totaling \$794 million, Mr. Taylor said.

"We wanted to find an equitable way of paying for it, and after reviewing toll structures, we feel this is the proper way to go," Mr. Taylor said.

"We hope to experience a growth rate of about 2 percent a year in traffic flow, with an

eventual goal of having 35 percent of the north-south traffic using the system."

In addition to the 15 percent discount for two-axle vehicles that use EZPass, DelDOT will offer 50 percent discounts to five- and six-axle vehicles that use the electronic toll collection system. Currently, approximately 35 percent of the heavy trucks that ride on Del. 1 use the EZPass system, Mr. Taylor said.

DelDOT studies have shown 63 percent of the vehicles using the limited access system are from Delaware.

"The incentive to use EZPass is from both a time and safety sense," Mr. Taylor said.

As part of the plan to increase efficiency, some toll collectors from the Dennys Road plaza near Dover will be moved to the Biddle's Corner plaza, just south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. The transfers are being done on a voluntary basis, according to John Marinucci, business manager for highway operations at DelDOT.

"We have committed to opening the Dennys Road plaza with a reduced crew," Mr. Marinucci said. "We are in the midst of installing bill changers to see how they work, and we will evaluate their performance and the need for human toll takers at that location once Scarborough Road has been opened in the near future."

Mr. Taylor said Delaware is about on par with tolls in the region for newly constructed roads, although he admitted tolls are lower on roads that have been in place for a long time.

The new toll system is expected to go into effect around Nov. 18.

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